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FASHION / DESIGNER AND LUXURY

## White Milano Explores Sustainable Fashion, Relation With Nature

The international apparel and accessories trade show ran from Feb. 22 to 25.

By [Teresa Potenza](#) on March 4, 2019



Looks from Parcoat courtesy image

MILAN — Sustainable fashion and its relationship with nature — that was the recurring theme that inspired the latest edition of [White Milano](#), the international [apparel](#) and accessories [trade show](#) here.

In addition to White's four locations of Tortona 27 (Superstudio Più), Tortona 31 (Opificio), Tortona 35 (Hotel Nhow) and Tortona 54 (Ex Ansaldo BASE), the show added a new area called "Give a Fok-us, Focus on the Unfocused," and developed in partnership

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with Italian association Confartigianato Imprese. Under the creative direction of Matteo Ward, cofounder of the brand Wråd, Give a Fok-us explored the relationship between fashion, nature and society through an interactive format exhibited by Italian companies and designers such as Veneto, Italy-based Drawlight.

Presenting their collections for fall 2019, 514 exhibitors participated this season, compared with 546 last February, closing with a 4.8 percent increase in visitors, totaling 25,256. Of these, 75 percent came from Italy, up 1.4 percent. The number of foreign buyers increased 6.8 percent.

These figures reflect the efforts to present White as a baseline for new trends: “Sustainable fashion represents an important opportunity to dialogue with the new generation of consumers, who are paying more and more attention to the traceability of the fashion product,” said [Massimiliano Bizzi, founder of White Milano](#). “But we also want to give an opportunity to buyers, who can renew their stores’ range following the latest trends.”

Following the sustainable path, young French designer Lydia Bahia presented La Seine & Moi — her faux fur coats have also won the Vegan fashion awards by PETA. “I wanted to do my bit for an environment-friendly fashion production,” Bahia explained. Passionate about both innovative and vintage design, Bahia launched a retro-pop collection distinguished by a colorful range of hues for coats and Seventies-inspired French hats. Founded three years ago in Paris, La Seine & Moi now sells in Seoul, New York, Milan and Palermo.

Wråd was founded with Ward’s friends Silvia Giovanardi and Victor Santiago. The team started four years ago by launching a manifesto for environmentally conscious fashion production, which evolved into their label. “We aim at a sustainable supply chain, but also at raising awareness about our planet’s situation,” Giovanardi said. The team has therefore started by using renewable and biodegradable materials as well as manufacturing processes aimed at lowering the use of water and the carbon footprint and reducing other chemical footprints that may contaminate not only the environment but also people’s skin.

Karachi, Pakistan-born Meher Kakalia moved to London to study and work in the world of finance. After a few years, she



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decided to use her experience to create her own fashion brand, named after her. She started with a shoe collection, which stands out for using Pakistan's ancient tradition of embroidery and handmade shoes. Kakalia has looked for craft workshop partners, choosing those that were run by women in Karachi. The latest shoe collection features two lines: One comprises ankle boots inspired by Texas; the other is a collection inspired by geometrical patterns. Flats, sandals and boots are all hand-embroidered and made of leather, often inlaid with sparkling metals. Meher Kakalia has presented a small collection of satchels and clutches recently and is now launching a men's line.

Handicrafts and sustainable production are the main features of House of Mua Mua as well. The Italian designer Ludovica Virga started in 2006 by manufacturing crocheted dolls in Bali. (The Indonesian island where she lives with her husband and her daughter.) Success came when Virga created a Karl Lagerfeld-like doll. The designer appreciated it so much that he commissioned more than 500. Virga started to produce new characters, from Anna Wintour to Coco Chanel and Lady Gaga, maintaining production in Bali and allocating part of the revenues to a school in Sumbawa that supports women's education.



House of Mua Mua Courtesy image

Virga has also launched a women's wear collection, a chromatic




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feast that includes running pants and trenches, jeans and maxidresses sparkled with sequins and with an ironic take on fashion, playing on lettering (like “I don’t give a chic” or “Think rich look poor”) and cartoon characters. “We are trying to use recycled materials and to promote the financial independence of Bali families” hit by the 2004 tsunami, Virgo said. This is how a capsule collection called “Less plastic is fantastic” was born — the first step toward plastic-free production.

All the values involved in the concept of “family” lay behind the new brand Parcoats, presented in January at Pitti Uomo in Florence. Its outerwear collection is produced by Tuscan entrepreneur Giovanni Allegri, under the creative direction of Simone Guidarelli and Masha Brigatti. The brand’s name indicates its philosophy: a style that combines parka and coat, the old and the new. “We wanted to revive the tradition of coats in a modern way and to give a positive message based on the most important kind of society: family,” Brigatti explained. Bold colors and Tuscan tapestry-inspired coats and parkas have patterns that have been hand-printed in the north of Italy, while the rest of the processes take place near Florence. Prices range from between 500 and 1,000 euros.

At Superstudio, another new area, the Knit Lab, debuted this season, hosting international knitwear brands, including I-am-chen, the label founded by designer Zhi Chen in Hong Kong. The colorful collection features garments that are knitted together into one piece, and the technique gives each piece a double face. General manager Bao Dai explained that two years after the launch of the brand, Chen is already selling not only in China but also in the U.S. and in the U.K.

The futuristic knitwear designed by Mario Caruana is a story of love for the Sicilian way of knitting. “I used to watch the work of women in my homeland, then I started working with one of them and later on I launched my own label,” Caruana said. The latest collection is the cashmere line Robot18, manufactured in Italy. “I chose bold colors and gender-neutral sweaters and dresses to reach a younger and wider target,” the designer explained.

Buyers could find new creative inspirations at the Basement, which hosted an area dedicated to Estonian labels brought by

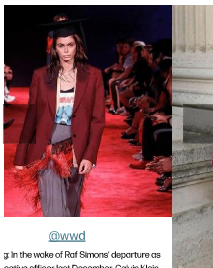


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Fashionavant Showroom. Guild was among them; founded by Joan Hint and her life partner Sten Karik in their own house in Tallinn, the couple launched the denim brand Reval Denim Guild and Guild Hattery seven years ago. The production is based in Estonia but the designers work also with Italian, Spanish and Japanese firms, “after checking their production processes, as we want them to be fully sustainable,” Hint said. “We also want them to share our philosophy and we host our Estonian partners in our house every start of the week, to talk about our collections and about our lives, practicing meditation together, too.” The labels are made of recycled paper and contain seeds that can be planted.

Also in the Estonian area, the one-piece knitting dresses and the cotton T-shirts and dresses collection designed by Kristel Kuslapuu stood out. The knitwear in particular is stunning — almost works of art — all made by Kuslapuu herself in her studio: “One dress may take around two weeks to be ready, and each of them is unique and numbered,” said Kuslapuu, who has started expanding her business from Estonia to the U.S., to New York in particular.

## A look from Kristel Kuslapuu courtesy image

“The Belgian focus” supported by the Flanders District of Creativity and hosted by Tortona 31-Opificio, is also worth a mention. Among the six brands that took part this year, Helder stood out for a collection made of biological and recycled fabrics. LN Knits showcased baby alpaca sweaters handmade by Peruvian craftswomen, who are also given the opportunity to bring their children at work if needed. Founded by Ellen Kegels 10 years ago, the company next April will launch a new T-shirt and jeans collection made of eco-friendly and recycled materials.

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